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ABSTRACT

Exploring diversity instills in children an awareness and respect for themselves and others. Research projects that address stereotyping, race relations, and prejudice within ourselves can be developed through collaboration between the librarian and classroom teacher (who may themselves be of different cultures). These research projects help children to understand that the world is made up of interrelated people; that people must not be judged on appearance or background alone; and that individuals and their contributions to society are of primary importance. These projects encourage children to be more tolerant of others and to savor the rich diversity of the changing world culture. Materials that promote cultural diversity and tolerance in a positive way are available from many publishers in many formats. Includes a bibliography of tolerance and diversity sources. (Contains 39 references.) (Author/SWC)

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ACCEPTING TOLERANCE AND DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Exploring diversity instills in children an awareness and respect for themselves and others. Research projects that address stereotyping, race relations, and prejudice within ourselves can be developed through collaboration between the librarian and classroom teacher (who may themselves be of different cultures). These research projects help children to understand that the world is made up of interrelated people; that people must not be judged on appearance or background alone; and that individuals and their contributions to society are of primary importance. These projects encourage children to be more tolerant of others and to savour the rich diversity of the changing world culture.

THE NEED FOR TOLERANCE

We educators are well aware that multicultural education is already an increasingly important and vital component of our educational environmant. In our multicultural society children are constantly exposed to a global information society. Getting along in a changing world is essential and children must be taught to be more tolerant of others.
They must learn to appreciate the rich diversity of America's changing culture.

When children become more tolerant, their self-confidence is increased. This creates the ability to be comfortable and thus learn to interact in all kinds of situations and mix with all different people. This gift of tolerance is found in our hearts. We cannot buy it at a gift or department store. Tolerance is one way to show acceptance and respect for our differences. It becomes the most precious and important gift of love for all—young or old.

We as educators need to create ways and means to guide our children in this globally perplexing and changing world. We know we are imperfect, but we are assured that
global interaction will better children's conflict resolution skills. It will also help to create a more enjoyable and interesting life.

THE ROLE OF READING

Teaching children to celebrate differences and not discriminate is the solution. We must teach our students that prejudice, hatred, and stereotyping are not acceptable. These are behaviors that can be overcome. When children can appreciate and understand their own origin and heritage will this not lead them to appreciate the traditions, customs and beliefs of others? Through reading and research we can

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explore with our children the rich and wonderful cultures thriving in America today—cultures such as African-American, Arab-American, Japanese-American, Jewish-American, Central American, Chinese-American, Irish-American, Korean-American, Mexican-American, Native American, Puerto Rican-American, and Vietnamese-American. Studying and celebrating differing cultural values, traditions, and family living concepts enriches students with a greater acceptance and understanding of their American heritage and community.

A present and important concern of librarians, public and school, is the promotion of reading. It is the responsibility of every educator to create an atmosphere of reading—a "reading culture." The materials must be well selected in order to attract and entice readers of all kinds. Students will find it harder to resist well selected sources with fascinating photographs and personal narratives such as the *You Were There* autobiographies. These fresh autobiographies that explore the way people live will acquaint readers with the basics of a culture's history and heritage. Students will become aware that their lives and their own historical era are an intimate part of this on-going human saga. Bringing the world to the library develops in children the appreciation of the contributions and achievements for the global people they encounter.

We educators need to implement diverse ways to promote cultural diversity. Implementing ethnic programs—educational and fun projects—with their activities will make libraries the windows to the world. We must encourage students to pursue reading and guide them to examine their attitudes. Will this not broaden their appreciation of others and raise questions to research their beliefs? We first teach children to be tolerant of one person or one group of persons, then we expand from the small groups to larger groups of people. In this way, we will promote cultural diversity and be able to plant the seed of peace.

Truly we must tell our children that racism and prejudice are not acceptable. We must teach tolerance.

PROJECTS AT ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

The Conceptual Frameworks for Teacher Education at Illinois State University includes statements reflecting the moral and intellectual virtues of its graduates. Among the moral and intellectual virtues are these: a sensitivity toward the varieties of individual and cultural diversity; a respect for learners of all ages and a special regard for childhood and adolescence; and a knowledge and appreciation of the diversity among learners. The Teaching Materials Center collections are a reflection of these virtues.

When teacher education students are introduced to the TMC materials and instructed in their use in a classroom setting, they too are inculcated with these virtues and they learn what materials will best produce the desired learning outcomes.

Materials that promote cultural diversity and tolerance in a positive way are available from many publishers and in many formats—book and nonbook. The non-book materials promoting cultural diversity and tolerance can include such items as videotapes, sound cassettes and sound CDs, CD-ROM products, pictures, posters, games, kits, puzzles, models and realia. Below is a bibliography of sources and a list of publishers.

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Periodicals

Book Links A Booklist Publication, American Library Association
Cobblestones Cobblestone Publishing
Faces Cobblestone Publishing
Multicultural Review Greenwood Publishing Group

Publishers

Chelsea Curriculum Publication, School Division
P.O.Box 5186
Yeadon, PA 19050-0686
800-362-9786

Children's Book Press
6400 Hollis Street, Suite 4
Emeryville, CA 94608
510-655-3395

Culture Catalog
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